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ABSTRACT

Professional development is viewed from several perspectives--time, funding, planning, and student outcomes--and includes both an urban and a rural story. This issue provides a special pullout section designed as a checklist to help guide professional development planning activities. The following articles are included: "Perspectives on Managing Staff Development" (Lenaya Raack), in which NCREL experts discuss a variety of key staff development issues for school administrators; "Common Goals & Promising Practices" (Ann Kinder), in which a rural school district and an urban school offer two successful examples of staff development; "Money Talk: Funding Professional Development" (Ann Kinder), which explores how states and districts allocate money to support professional development; "Improving Student Achievement around the Globe" (Gina Amenta-Shin), which describes how NCREL has collaborated with the Department of Defense Education Activity to help teachers integrate technology into classroom instruction; and "Thoughts on...Becoming a Better Teacher" (Cinder Cooper), in which a summer intern at NCREL explains the benefits of staff development and technology in addressing students with diverse needs. (DFR)

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North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Spring 2000

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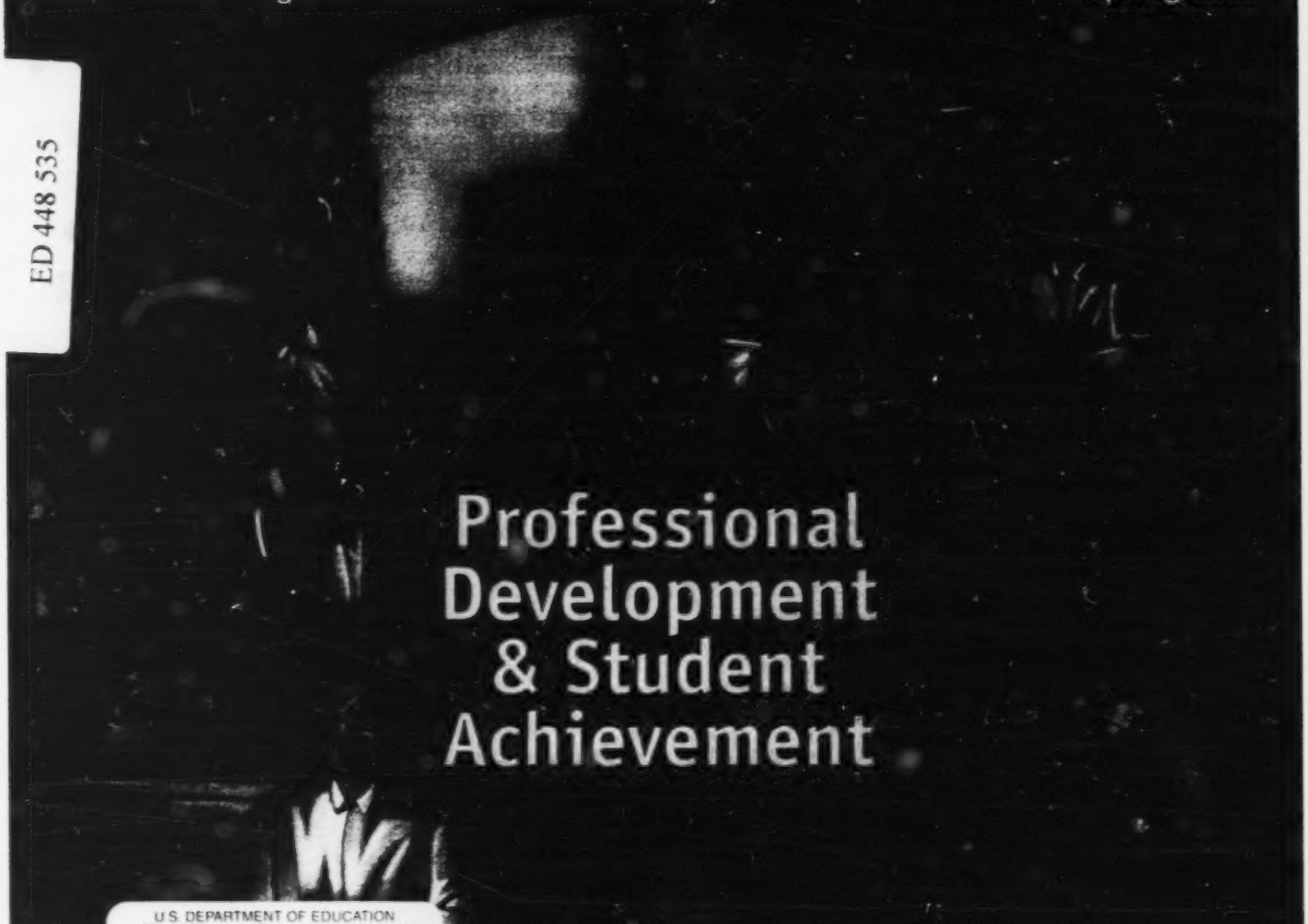

Professional Development & Student Achievement

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- Money Talk: Funding Staff Development

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NCREL's
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contents

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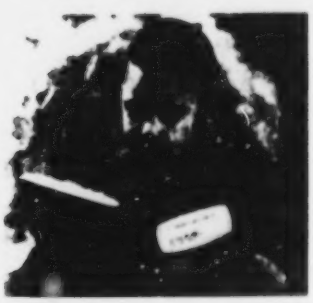
Volume 2, No. 1



Cover: Bill Brandon

Cover Story

Perspectives on Managing Staff Development 8
NCREL experts discuss a variety of key staff development issues for school administrators.

Features

Common Goals & Promising Practices 4
Travel between a rural school district in Sparta, Michigan, and an urban school in Hammond, Indiana, for a look at two successful examples of staff development in action.

Money Talk: Funding Professional Development 12
Explore how states and districts allocate money to support professional development.

Improving Student Achievement Around the Globe 15
Find out how NCREL has collaborated with the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) to help teachers integrate technology into classroom instruction.

Becoming a Better Teacher 18
In this interview, a summer intern at NCREL explains the benefits of staff development and technology in addressing students with diverse needs.

Special Pull-Out Section

Professional Development Action Planner

A Special Message from Gina Burkhardt, Executive Director

Is there a connection between student achievement and teacher effectiveness? *Absolutely.* However, many schools and districts struggle with a variety of issues surrounding professional development. And, it is not just educators who are grappling with these challenges. State policymakers are tackling tough questions to make informed decisions about funding. They're also hard at work building the framework for a comprehensive systemic model of professional development.

This issue of *NCREL's Learning Point* takes a look at professional development from several perspectives–time, funding, planning, and student outcomes–and includes both an urban and a rural story. The special pull-out section in the center is a checklist to help guide your professional development planning activities. It was taken from *Learning From the Best: A Toolkit for Schools and Districts Based on Model Professional Development Award Winners.* This resource, one of many available on NCREL's Web site, illustrates the practices and strategies of winners of the U.S. Department of Education's Model Professional Development Awards.

Learn more about NCREL's professional development resources with an online visit to www.ncrel.org/pd/, and please share your comments on this magazine by completing and returning the reader survey.

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feature

common goals promising practices

By Ann Kinder

Hammond, Indiana, and Sparta, Michigan, couldn't be further apart—not in miles but rather in terms of contrasting landscapes and cultures that usually distinguish rural from urban communities. A closer look, however, reveals that Hammond and Sparta have a lot in common when it comes to the successful professional development practices of their schools.

The Sparta School District began to incorporate professional development into its strategic plan in 1989. Sparta Middle School Principal Mary Stearns recalls, "Every district realizes it has to do professional development. Our district started to include it in the initial stages of the school improvement planning process."

Like Sparta, Caldwell Elementary School in Hammond began implementing a professional development plan as part of an overall school improvement effort. Principal Don Pinnick remembers, "We were going through the process of becoming a Title I schoolwide building and were required to develop a professional development plan. It was the first time the entire staff objectively examined instructional and curricular practices."

For both Caldwell and Sparta, the first step involved analyzing a lot of data. Student performance, student attendance, student behavior, parent involvement, staff development, and curriculum and instructional audits were all examined. In both school districts, it was determined that student performances on achievement tests were continually decreasing and

5

teachers' professional practices were in need of refinement.

What next? Caldwell and Sparta developed core teams of teachers and administrators to begin the planning process. According to Stearns, the Sparta school district conducted staff needs assessment surveys. Then the district listened to what its teachers had to say in terms of the critical issues.

It was a similar story at Caldwell. After teachers examined the data, they identified and prioritized the issues that needed to be addressed. Once the entire staff came to a consensus on a major issue, a decision was made. At both Caldwell and Sparta, teacher buy-in was not a major issue. After all, the teachers were designing and developing the professional development plans themselves.

Some noticeable changes were implemented at Caldwell and Sparta. Caldwell extended the length of its school day by 20 minutes. This made the school eligible for six early-release days for staff development. "These half days have been extremely beneficial in working toward our goals and creating a more professional culture at Caldwell," Pinnick explained.

One major change at Sparta was a new grading procedure called ABC-I. The "I" stands for "In Progress" and means the student has not mastered the material but will be allowed to continue to work toward an A, B, or C. The system has been used for more than eight years and has significantly reduced the student failure rate. The district has designated times set aside when students can work toward replacing their I grades with A's, B's, or C's.

"We have an after-school homework club as well as Saturday school and summer programs that give students the opportunity to complete their subject requirements," explained Stearns. "We now go around our county and provide inservices for other planning teams and tell them how we implemented the process."

Caldwell and Sparta share another similarity: mandatory staff meetings. But as both Pinnick and Stearns describe, they're not stereotypical staff meetings where the principal does all the talking while the staff makes lists of more work to do. Instead, both locations use their meetings to explore professional development opportunities.

At Caldwell, the staff is required to meet twice a month and is compensated for their time. A typical meeting includes reflection on practice sessions, sharing of new resources, sharing of professional readings, staff development mini-lessons, or

a guest speaker. Since changing the approach of the meetings, Pinnick has noticed a greater level of professionalism among his staff, but admits it took time. He believes the culture at Caldwell has improved through staff development.

Likewise, Sparta uses its meeting time to discuss important issues such as implementing new programs and assessing students' needs. When a staff member returns from a conference or workshop, the meeting time is used to train the rest of the staff in the subject matter. Stearns' and Pinnick's staffs asked to be taught by their colleagues. Sterns explains that this change didn't happen overnight and that this kind of comfort level among colleagues took time to evolve.

Once the staffs at Caldwell and Sparta examined the data, put together planning teams, prioritized goals, and implemented new practices, it was necessary to determine the outcomes. At Caldwell, student performance and behavior were measured in a variety of ways—standardized test scores, observation, and quarterly assessments, just to name a few. Pinnick says this is an ongoing process and that Caldwell is continually investigating various forms of assessment. At Sparta, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program was used to measure student achievement.

Also, a writing portfolio follows students from grade level to grade level to track performance in that particular area. Stearns remarks, "We know that when dollars are put toward the right kind of professional development, the pay-off is exhibited in improved test scores for students."

Teachers and administrators at both sites would agree there is a direct link between professional development and student achievement. Pinnick explains how the two are connected: "We cannot improve student achievement in the future without changing our practices. The only way to change our practices and beliefs is through professional development."

Starting the Journey

It hasn't been an easy journey for Caldwell and Sparta. There have been many obstacles along the way. Barriers include funding, resources, expertise, outside pressures, and support. Without a doubt, the number one obstacle was time. As Pinnick puts it, teachers need time to work with each other, time to reflect, and time to plan together. They need time to develop and implement their newfound knowledge.

Despite these obstacles, Caldwell and Sparta emerged with successful professional development plans. Today, these two sites are still hard at work, constantly improving their professional development efforts. Pinnick and Stearns describe the process as a journey and have some valuable advice for schools that are gearing up to create a plan or those that are working to improve a plan:

- ✔ Objectively examine data and current practices.
- ✔ Work together as a staff.
- ✔ Identify no more than three critical issues.
- ✔ Research the best practices.
- ✔ Consider everyone's needs.
- ✔ Develop a focused and realistic plan.
- ✔ Assess the plan and change what doesn't work.
- ✔ Make sure the staff feels ownership, or the process won't work.

For other successful strategies...

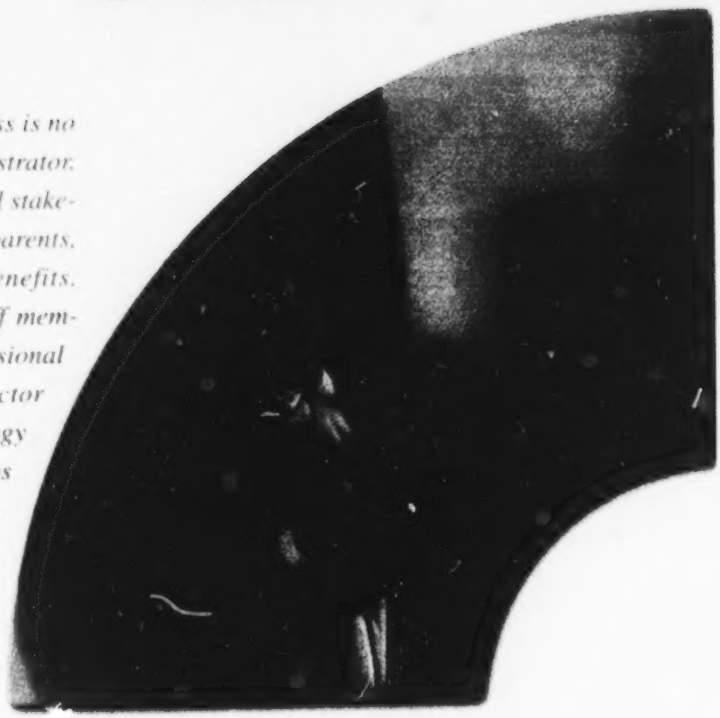
http://knowledgeloom.org/
This site, hosted by the LAB at Brown University, features research-based information and success stories that are searchable by topic, geographic location, grade level, and even setting. Be sure to share your own success stories!

www.nsdc.org/educatorindex.htm
Full-text versions of articles from the National Staff Development Council's publications offer a variety of effective, step-by-step models developed by practitioners who base their methods on research and real-world experience.

focus

Perspectives Staff De

By Lenaya Raack



Managing the staff development process is no easy assignment for any school administrator. However, when the process is working, all stakeholders (including students, teachers, parents, and school leaders) enjoy many benefits. Learning Point asked three NCREL staff members to share their expertise on professional development: Kristin Ciesemier, director of the North Central Regional Technology in Education Consortium, which helps educators make effective use of technology to improve student learning; Gina Amenta-Shin, a program associate who leads online professional development for educators teaching in various parts of the world; and Claudette Rasmussen, the project director of Blueprints: A Practical Toolkit for Designing and Facilitating Professional Development, a soon-to-be-released CD-ROM.

"The single most important factor influencing student achievement is the quality of the teacher. If you have a high-quality teacher, students will be receiving good learning opportunities."
—Kristin Ciesemier, director, North Central Regional Technology in Education Consortium

Timing Is Everything

For more and more school administrators, developing "high-quality teachers" translates into providing ongoing professional development, a *hot* topic these days. Teachers—veterans of one-day workshops and visiting speakers—may wonder where they will find time for something they're not convinced will make a difference. For principals and district administrators the question often is, *"How do we find the time and use it wisely, and how can we tell if it's working?"*

Ciesemier points out that finding time for professional development is a critical issue for most schools. "First and foremost," she says, "is getting the district commitment and then

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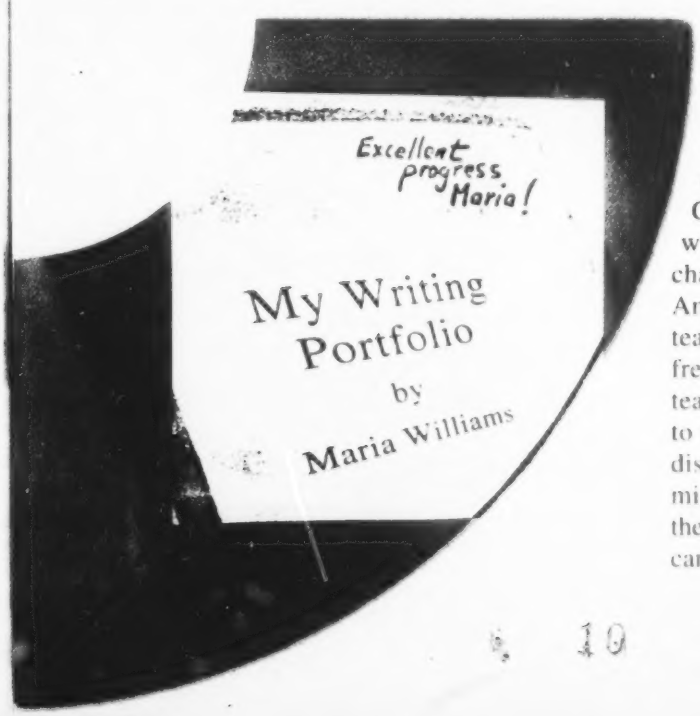
putting the dollars behind it. The principal and teachers have to determine everything they *could* do at their school, knowing that there are specific things that the district administration and school board may expect them to accomplish. This doesn't necessarily mean waiting until there is a new board policy; educators can come to a consensus on what needs to be done, who is going to do it, and how it will be done. Having sorted through the different priorities and expectations, you can begin planning strategies."

One Size Doesn't Fit All

Administrators need to make sure their professional development time is tailored to their teachers' needs. According to Gina Amenta-Shin, "research shows that traditional, one-size-fits-all staff development doesn't work. Too frequently this consists of a formal workshop or class that is selected by the administration. Teachers may not be involved in deciding what they're going to learn."

Another problem, says Amenta-Shin, is that "often, professional development is not led by educators or people who have recent classroom experiences. In such cases, teachers have a hard time connecting what's being presented to their everyday, real-life classroom experiences."

Claudette Rasmussen agrees and adds, "What also doesn't work very well is a passive type of experience that simply raises teachers' awareness about an issue. If teachers aren't actively engaged in the process, it usually doesn't get applied in the classroom. What works best for student learners also works best for adult learners. All learners need to build on the knowledge and experience they already possess. It is from that base that they can become actively engaged in new learning."



"Administrators need to think about the objectives they want to meet and their commitment to making them happen," says Ciesemier. "Then they need to come up with creative strategies that address common challenges," she adds. One of those, says Amenta-Shin, could be release time for teachers, "so, for example, a substitute could free up two teachers to observe another teacher in a classroom—and then take time to talk about it." Ciesemier notes that more districts are finding that just by starting five minutes earlier each day, every other week, they get half a day or a couple of hours they can then use for professional development.

Some districts have teachers stay after school and come in on weekends. However, issues such as workload and compensation can make this less of an option.

Rasmussen points out that some school systems address staff development through "block scheduling, which usually means, not only team teaching, but also team planning time. In this case, teachers have time built into their school day to talk about their teaching and truly engage in meaningful discussions that focus on instruction and learning. That is *real professional development in action*: there is the collaborative curriculum development, collaborative team teaching, and the opportunity to then look back together and say, 'this worked well, this didn't, and what else do we need to know or do?'" Rasmussen believes that in these situations, "professional development happens very naturally within the context of the job, always in relation to what's going on in the classroom."

What's the Payoff?

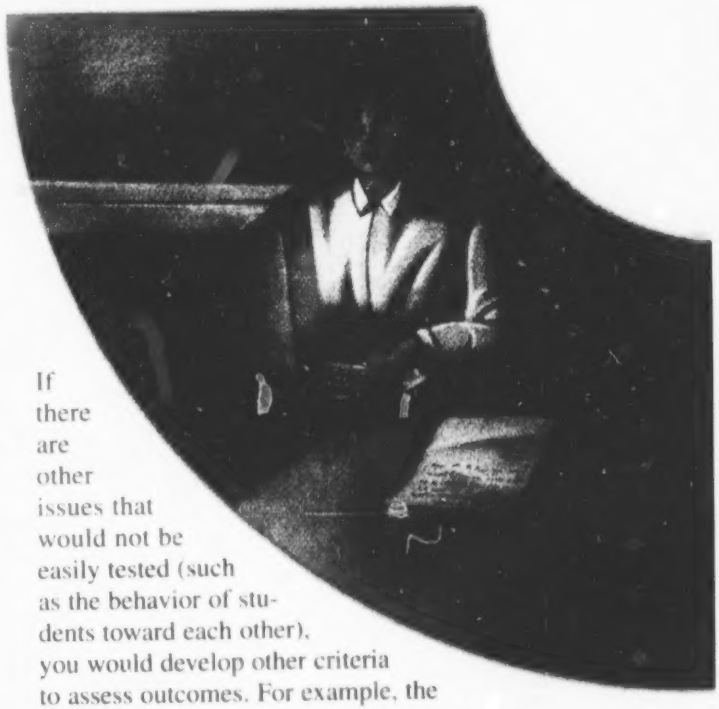
So how do we know staff development is paying off so that teachers and students are really learning? "If you want to know if it's working," says Amenta-Shin, "go back to the school reform process: What were your expected outcomes? Are you seeing students get there? Are your teachers reaching the goals you all agreed upon?"

According to Ciesemier, "One of the first things you can look for in assessing how effective your professional development has been is determining if there is a change in your teachers' attitudes. The next step is finding out if they have a clear plan to reach their new goals. Research shows that if the teachers have thought about what they are going to do, there is a good chance that something will actually change. But if there has been little reflection on how they are going to integrate what they've learned, chances are, it will never happen. You may have altered some attitudes, but a change in a classroom teacher's approach is going to make the difference for the students."

"One of the first things you can look for in assessing how effective your professional development has been is determining if there is a change in your teachers' attitudes. The next step is finding out if they have a clear plan to reach their new goals."

Another form of assessment, says Rasmussen, is data-driven decision making. "It's more than a trendy phase," she explains. "We can only be accountable for our professional development and we can only look at its impact on teaching and learning if we collect and examine data and know how to use it in our planning and implementation of professional development," she notes.

"Most people see evaluation as a difficult task," says Ciesemier, "but it doesn't need to be. If schools have done their needs assessment and identified their priorities, then they can evaluate change using standardized tests.



If there are other issues that would not be easily tested (such as the behavior of students toward each other), you would develop other criteria to assess outcomes. For example, the evaluation could be a simple count. Let's say that one of your teachers finds a pattern of eight children per day turning in incomplete homework assignments. As she evaluates her homework instructions for the class, she decides to offer them additional tips—and she sends home a note

for parents. As a direct result, she notices the problem diminishing."

"Some districts look first and foremost at assessment results, especially standardized tests and often the state tests," says Rasmussen. "However," she notes, "many schools look at student work over a period of time, whether they've collected them in a portfolio or just selected various samples. Sometimes, they look at the work to help develop assessments; other times they want to gain a better understanding of the student learning over time." Ramussen sees the longer-term evaluation of student performance as "a very effective approach to the assessment of the professional development."

In conclusion, Rasmussen believes that professional development's biggest impact occurs when there is some alignment between your individual teacher goals for professional development and those of your school and district. "When you have a common focus," she points out, "and when you have identified your needs and set your goals, you are more likely to have a real impact on student learning. Working together, administrators and teachers will find it easier to identify the instructional strategies and the staff development approaches that really work." ●

Resources

- ***The National Staff Development Council*** has standards for professional development that are helpful in planning and evaluating professional development. Visit their Web site at www.nsdc.org/educatorindex.htm

- ***Fifth Discipline Field Book*** by Peter Senge offers lessons that walk readers through the attitudes staff members must have. Included are activities on how to begin a visioning process, for example, to do gap analysis, which would be required to design a program that would create a learning organization.

- ***Student Achievement Through Staff Development*** by Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers helps you plan a comprehensive system of staff development. It takes a look at the governance, design, and implementation of specific programs within that system. You'll also find recommendations based on the study of a wide range of staff development programs, research on teachers and teaching, information about the workplace, research on how teachers learn, and ideas about how to design effective programs.

- ***The Teaching Gap*** by James W. Stigler and James Hiebert is a powerful book that discusses dynamic professional development strategies.

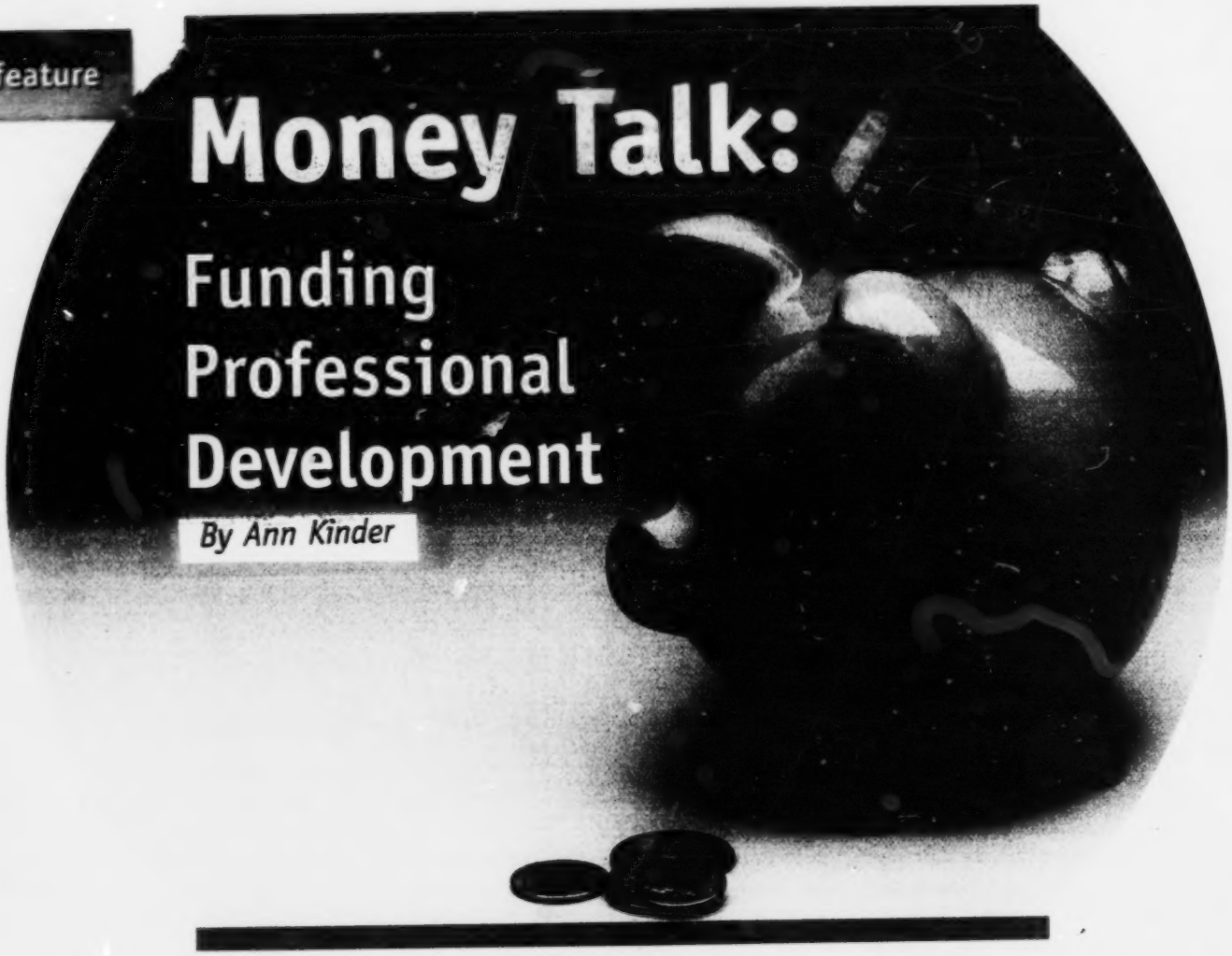
- ***Blueprints: A Practical Toolkit for Designing and Facilitating Professional Development in Mathematics and Science*** is a CD-ROM, available in May, with extensive professional development content and research and more than 300 resources.

feature

Money Talk:

Funding Professional Development

By Ann Kinder



State funding for professional development is on the minds of educators, administrators, and policymakers these days. But before any major decisions are made about this critical issue, some challenging questions must be tackled.

Who is ultimately responsible for professional development—the state, the local school district, the individual school, or the teacher? How is funding for teacher development linked to student performance? How will student outcomes be measured?

These questions and others are addressed in two recent reports published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL): *State Policy on Professional Development: Rethinking the Linkages to Student Outcomes* and *State Programs for Funding Teacher Professional Development.* These documents were developed in response to a growing number of requests from state policymakers who have been under pressure by their state's department of education for additional professional development funding.

NCREL's Learning Point takes a closer look at this timely issue in the following interview with Sabrina Laine, director of NCREL's

(Continued on page 13)

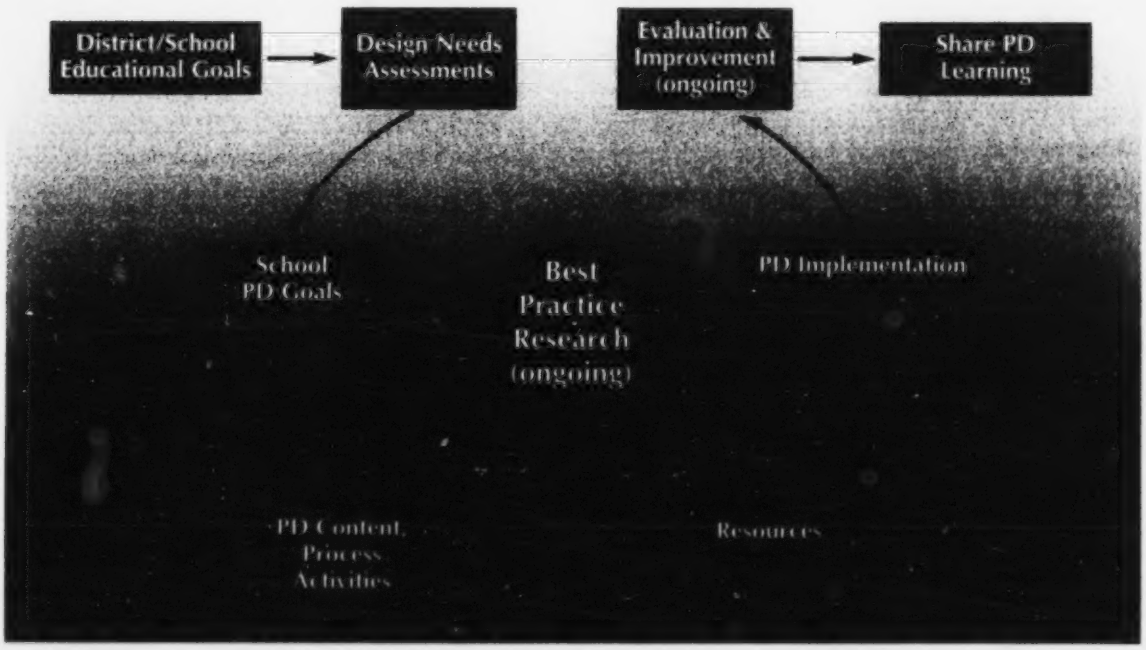
Professional Development Action Planner:
Introduction

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) has recently published a toolkit for schools and districts based on model professional development programs. This practical resource was developed from the results of The National Awards Program for Model Professional Development created by the U.S. Department of Education. A key objective of the toolkit is to help educators and/or administrators tailor their professional development to the students, teachers, goals, and visions of their school or district.

The success of a professional development program lies in the *content* of professional development (PD), the *process* used to create and implement PD, and the staff and students' *learning results*. The linkage of content and process is inherent in determining PD's level of impact on student learning. Staff and students' learning results should show a strong bond between professional development and school performance. When implemented effectively, professional development contributes to enhanced school performance.

Below is a graphic illustrating how The Professional Development Cycle incorporates key components.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CYCLE



On the following three pages is an Organizer's Checklist (reprinted from the toolkit). This organizational tool gives you the action steps and decisions you need in order to make professional development an active part of your school or district.

To order the complete toolkit, please visit our online catalog (www.ncrel.org/catalog/) or call 1-800-356-2735.

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Professional Development Action Planner:
Organizers' Checklist

Instructions:
Use this checklist to plan your organizing steps and meetings.

Step One: Designing Professional Development

1. Include professional development participants and organizers in the professional development design process.

- ❑ Decide who should be involved in the initial PD design working team.
- ❑ Decide what role other stakeholders will have in PD design, both initial and ongoing.
- ❑ Invite/notify stakeholders to participate in PD design.
- ❑ Determine leadership roles for the PD design working team.
- ❑ Determine the process for the PD design working team: When should you meet? What do you need in advance and who will provide it? Who will collect and distribute additional agenda items and supporting material? Are standing meetings mandatory? What happens if someone cannot attend? Who will facilitate the meeting to ensure that you prioritize and get through all critical agenda items? How will you make decisions—by consensus, vote, or other? Under what circumstances will you make decisions outside of group meetings? How? Who is responsible for communicating decisions to those who cannot participate? What will each of you do when a decision or action with which you disagree is made without your participation? Other issues?
- ❑ Create a standing agenda for all PD working team meetings, including updates on work in progress, new issues/problems, identification of preparatory work for next meeting, communication (who needs to be informed of decisions made in this meeting), and documents from this meeting that need to be saved in the main file.

2. Make a clear plan that includes:

a. How professional development supports the school/district's long-term plan.

- ❑ Review existing educational goals for the state, district, and school.
- ❑ "Map" district and school educational goals to ensure they are linked.
- ❑ Make a plan for linking team and individual classroom educational (not PD) goals to school goals in the future, including who will ensure linkage, when, and using what tools, and who will review and approve the goals.

b. A professional development needs assessment process.

- ❑ Plan and implement a student needs assessment process.
- ❑ Identify expert sources to assist with needs assessment, if required.
- ❑ Choose comparison groups.
- ❑ Choose sources of data, both existing and customized.
- ❑ Develop tools, as needed, to gather data.
- ❑ Gather data.
- ❑ Complete a summary of student needs after student assessments are complete.
- ❑ Plan a teacher/staff needs assessment process.
- ❑ Identify expert sources to assist with staff needs assessment, if required.
- ❑ Identify staff skills/competencies needed to close student achievement gaps.
- ❑ Identify the actual skill/competency level of staff.
- ❑ Complete a summary of your staff's gaps and strengths after assessments are complete.

c. Professional development goals.

- ❑ Create professional development principles (general goals and parameters).
- ❑ Create professional development objectives (specific goals).

d. Professional development content, process, and activities.

- ❑ Plan a process for selecting PD content and activities at each organization level (district, school, team, and individual staff).
- ❑ Complete the following tasks for each organization level:
  - ❑ Identify specific PD content required to meet each PD goal.
  - ❑ Identify potential activities to learn PD content.
  - ❑ Research potential activities.
  - ❑ Select activities at each organizational level.

e. Research that supports the chosen content/process for professional development.

- ❑ Include research into best practices in the initial PD design.

f. Resources available to support professional development.

- ❑ Identify sources and uses of financial resources.
- ❑ Identify needs and sources of expertise for each selected PD activity.
- ❑ Identify needs and sources of expertise for PD design, implementation, and evaluation processes as needed.
- ❑ Identify needs and sources for PD-related facilities.

g. Professional development evaluation steps.

- ❑ Identify success measures for each PD goal and each supporting activity.
- ❑ Identify data sources and gathering method for each measure.
- ❑ Plan a process for reporting evaluation findings.
- ❑ Determine who will lead the process for making PD improvement.

3. Share the plan.

- ❑ Make a plan for ongoing communications, including information about the initial PD plan, with the school community.

Step Two: Implementing Professional Development

- ❑ Stay abreast of and incorporate best practices into teaching, learning, and leadership.
- ❑ Make sure school/district policies and practices support actual PD implementation for staff in schools.
- ❑ Identify critical factors for successful implementation and problem solving.
- ❑ Ensure that resources remain available to organize and implement PD.
- ❑ Identify opportunities to make PD part of everyday school life; revisit periodically to improve.

Step Three: Evaluating and Improving Professional Development

- ❑ Ensure implementation of the evaluation plan.
- ❑ Schedule time to review and improve the evaluation process after the first round of evaluation/improvement.

Step Four: Sharing Professional Development Learning

- ❑ Keep records of PD decisions to guide future decisions.
- ❑ Keep implementation materials organized and available to others.

(Continued from page 12)

Evaluation and Policy Information Center and coauthor of the reports mentioned above.

NCREL's Learning Point: ***Explain how professional development is currently funded.***

Laine: Basically, states and districts fund professional development in more than one way. This makes it challenging to determine how much money is really being invested. In our research, we identified two kinds of subsidies—*embedded subsidies*, which provide money for such things as release time for teacher training and professional development, and *direct subsidies* which come through programmatic funding.

Actually, in most cases there are funds currently available for professional development. The challenge is trying to clearly earmark them in the school or district budget (or clearly identify and tap into them so that the funds can become part of the school or district budget).

How are states linking professional development funding to student achievement?

Laine: States are just now building frameworks for assessing these linkages. The *State Policy on Professional Development* report offers a way to reshape state policy for funding professional development, providing state policymakers with questions to guide them through this process. The report points out that policies providing professional development opportunities for teachers and schools should focus on activities with a high probability of improving student outcomes.

What do administrators and educators need to know with regard to professional development funding?

Laine: Principals and teachers need to become more involved in helping policymakers and the public see the value of professional development. Over the years, professional development has not always been delivered very effectively. One-shot workshops or sit-and-get lectures that are not tied to local school improvement efforts are examples of this. As a result, professional development has a reputation for not being a sound investment for schools seeking to improve student outcomes. The bottom line is that it is very difficult to convince anyone of the benefits of professional development with anecdotal evidence or rhetoric.

What specific steps can administrators and educators take to get more involved?

Laine: Schools and districts should provide policymakers with data that show how much is being spent on professional development. The return on

Connecting Professional Development Funding With Student Outcomes

1. Link your professional development process with desired student outcomes.
2. Define how your interventions are likely to influence these outcomes.
3. Provide evidence that your activities have led to improvements in outcomes.
4. Develop methods of accounting for professional development funding.
5. Create a model that links funding for professional development to student outcomes.

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that investment should be measurable improvements in student achievement. Documenting these efforts and sharing the results with policymakers should guide decision making.

Has research provided any evidence that links professional development to student achievement and other outcomes?

Laine: Little research has been done on the issue of professional development specifically. However, William Sanders at the University of Tennessee has developed a model called *Value Added Assessment.* Used in Tennessee, this accountability model determines *actual* gains of students in relationship to their *expected* gains. One finding shows that when students have three quality teachers in a row, definite improvement is achieved. Conversely, when students have three underqualified teachers in a row, a significant drop in learning occurs. This example shows how researchers are starting to link teacher quality and teacher expertise to student outcomes. What is still missing is the next step: linking investments in professional development to student outcomes.

• • •

Answers to the questions of responsibility for professional development and its link to student performance, and how we measure student outcomes are still not clear.

However, progress is being made toward integrating these important questions into the early phases of the policymaking process. School principals and teachers can help policymakers and the public see the importance of professional development for higher student achievement and the fundamental role of funding. ●

"Researchers are starting to link **teacher quality** and **teacher expertise** to **student outcomes.**"

Want to Learn More?

State Programs for Funding Teacher Professional Development

This 17-page report documents the results of a state funding study for teacher professional development. The researchers examined specific state requirements; the relationship among professional development, certification, and continued employment; and various funding strategies.

State Policy on Professional Development: Rethinking Linkages to Student Outcomes

Conducted by the Regional Education Policy Research (REPR) Consortium, this study provides a framework (based on five questions) for policymakers to determine whether increased spending on teacher professional development affects student achievement.

To request individual copies of these reports, visit NCREL's online product catalog at **www.ncrel.org/catalog/** or call our order department at (800) 356-2735. Quantities are limited. Free while supplies last.

feature

Improving Student Achievement Around the Globe

By Gina Amenta-Shin

In the constant battle to prepare teachers to use technologies that support student achievement, NCREL has joined forces with the U.S. Department of Defense Educational Activity (DoDEA). Headquartered in Washington, D.C., DoDEA provides educational services to Department of Defense military and civilian dependents (preK-12) at school sites around the world.

In 1999, NCREL partnered with DoDEA to design and assist in the creation and implementation of a staff development technology plan. The primary goal of this combined technology initiative was to fully incorporate technology into the design, development, delivery, and assessment of instruction.

"The relationship between the Department of Defense Educational Activity and NCREL has been extremely fruitful in moving our schools forward in technology integration," explained Fannette Welton, DoDEA instructional systems specialist, educational technology. "The success of any program is largely dependent upon commitment, and thus far, we have found that schools participating in this initiative are far more committed to using technology and have found ways to work 'outside the box' with their respective school staffs."

One of the first steps in NCREL's effort to incorporate technology was developing the Technology Competencies Profile Tool for DoDEA educators. This self-assessment tool is proving to be a good starting point for teachers. It generates a profile identifying a teacher's level of expertise in teaching and learning technologies. Teachers can use this tool to mark their progress as they participate in professional development activities.

NCREL's next task was the creation of the Technology Leadership Team (TLT) Institute. This five-day training course helps school leaders customize their professional development plan to address the use of technology to support engaged learning. During the Institute, team members go through a problem-based learning process in which they examine research, communicate with experts, learn from each other, and use tools and strategies to help them improve their plan. School leadership teams:

- Examine technology's role in learning.
- Investigate teacher change.
- Apply principles of effective staff development.

"The success of any program is largely dependent upon commitment."

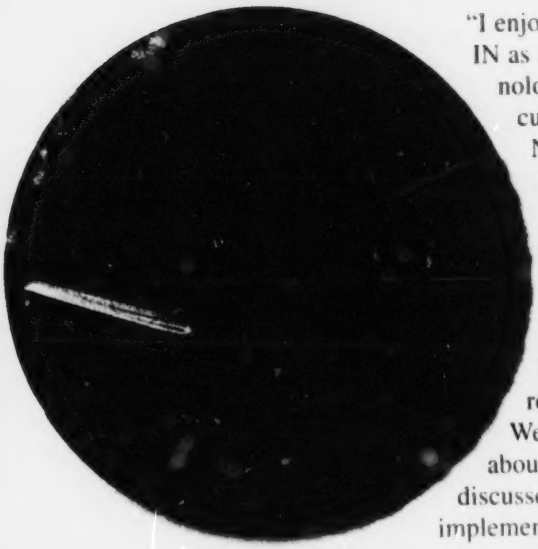
- Develop strategies to overcome obstacles.
- Use a variety of online tools.
- Explore curriculum software.
- Learn new technical skills.
- Launch follow-up and next-step strategies.

A unique component of the TLT Institute is the sharing of successful models from schools that make meaningful and creative use of technology in their instruction. "Featured schools" explain what they did to become models of technology instruction in engaged learning environments. Institute participants hear about teaching, learning, and technology integration not only from DoDEA schools but also from schools outside the system. This gives participants the opportunity to gain from the expertise of other schools that share the same issues and obstacles of integrating technology.

School leadership teams leave the institute with a plan that addresses the unique needs of their learning communities. The first of many TLT Institutes was held August 1999 in Leesburg, Virginia. Linda Curtis, principal of SHAPE Elementary School in Belgium, describes the impact that the first TLT Institute made on her school in the following e-mail message: *"You cannot imagine the growth teachers and students have made this year. The TLT Institute we attended in August gave us a focus to get kids engaged in learning by infusing technology into the curriculum. Our plan has been so successful that we would love to share our experience with other school teams. We at SHAPE Elementary School are blossoming!"*

Providing ongoing support to TLT Institute participants located throughout the world has created a challenge for NCREL. However, with the use of online support systems, NCREL created virtual collaborative workspaces. These workspaces offer an incredible opportunity to reach every teacher and to share the wisdom of the TLT Institute program.

Many follow-up opportunities are provided for participants of TLT Institutes. One example is the online graduate-



level course Leadership in Educational Technology (LET). This course allows teams to continue building their learning community around professional goals and common interest areas.

Course discussions focus on the integration of technology into teaching and learning. NCREL provides school technology teams with concepts, strategies, and tools for carrying out the goals of their plans.

An additional opportunity for school leaders is the thriving online professional community called TAPPED IN. Summaries of online group discussions that take place via TAPPED IN are posted to the LET Course Forum so participants can continue discussions on their own time. Also, frequently asked questions and information about resources related to the discussion topics are posted to the LET Course Forum. Eventually, the responsibility for hosting and facilitating the online sessions will rotate among the participants.

"I enjoy using TAPPED IN as a forum for technology integration discussion," remarks Nora Mulhern of Burrows Elementary School in Quantico, Virginia. "My school team meets for the online chats and later regroups to reflect on the topics. We share our feelings about how the issues discussed may affect the implementation of our staff development technology plan."

Plans are in the works to make the Technology Competencies Profile Tool, the TLT Institute, the LET course, and TAPPED IN accessible to all educators.

Over time, results of the NCREL/DoDEA partnership should show that using technology in teaching as a means to enhance student outcomes has become a natural process. This should result in effective instruction for teachers and in improved achievement for students. ●

Internet Resources

NCRTEC home page
http://www.ncrtec.org

DoDEA home page
http://www.odedodea.edu/

National Center for Technology Planning Guidebook for Developing an Effective Instructional Technology Plan
http://www.msstate.edu/~lsa1/nctp/guide.html

NCREL's Pathways to School Improvement. To the Point
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/thepoint/techtoc.htm

National Staff Development Council
http://www.nsdc.org

NCREL's Learning With Technology Course
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/lwteach1/sld001.htm

NCREL's Technology Connections For School Improvement Planners' Handbook and Teacher's Guide
http://www.ncrel.org/tplan/tplanB.htm

feature

Thoughts on...

Becoming a Better

By Cinder Cooper

Can a summer internship have an impact on your teaching? *Yes*, according to Tracy Van Peeren, a kindergarten teacher at Greenwood Elementary in St. Clair Shores, Michigan. Van Peeren, who was the 1999 Carole Fine Professional Development Intern at the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, explains in the following interview how her perspective on instructional strategies was broadened as she was exposed to new people and innovative teaching ideas.

NCREL's Learning Point: ***What challenges or issues do you face as a kindergarten teacher?***

Van Peeren: One of the biggest challenges I face is teaching children with different skill levels and learning styles. It can be very difficult meeting their diverse needs in one classroom.

Another challenge is delivering my curriculum in a way that's developmentally appropriate. In a kindergarten classroom you're responsible for a specific curriculum, but that doesn't mean all my students are ready for it.

How did the Carole Fine Internship add to or enhance your instruction?

Van Peeren: My work at the lab allowed me to interact with professionals who are very knowledgeable about various aspects of education, including early childhood education, literacy and technology. Their expertise ranged from delivery and best practices to assessment.

> "Professional development shouldn't be viewed as optional; it's essential. As educators we have an obligation to participate in professional development in order to provide the best education for our students because they are entitled to it."

Most valuable was a whole set of excellent resources I never knew were available, not just for me, but for others in my school and district. The Kindergarten Audit Tool [now in development] gave me the opportunity to review how I structure my classroom to see if it is developmentally appropriate to best meet the needs of all my kids.

Working on the project *Critical Issue: Addressing the Literacy Needs of Emergent and Early Readers [www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/cntareas/reading/li100.htm]*, and having access to materials from the *Strategic Teaching and Reading Project* (STRP) was very helpful. These assignments gave me a wealth of research to support how and why I do things in my classroom.

Being a part of an NCREL project with the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) [see story on page 9] added another dimension to my experience: it allowed me to focus on technology integration and professional development. Technology is one way to help address the needs of diverse learners.

I came out of the experience validated, feeling good that, yes, I really was on the right track. I also came away with some new strategies that could enhance my classroom instruction.

23

Teacher

What types of things were you able to experience during the internship that you might not have had time for otherwise?

Van Peeren: Classroom teachers can become isolated and not have opportunities to talk and collaborate with specialists in the field. Thanks to the internship, I was able to focus on instructional research and the collaborative aspects of education.

What was the most rewarding part of the internship?

Van Peeren: I had a very positive experience at NCREL because of the people I worked with. Everyone was very open and willing to help me. As I expressed interest in learning about a specific topic, there was always someone ready to share his or her information and resources.

I left the internship excited about coming back to my classroom and eager to put into practice all the things I learned.

What type of networking were you able to do?

Van Peeren: I was able to network within the lab and with some of its external partners. For example, DoDEA provided some great opportunities for networking with educators who were not just teaching here in the United States but around the world. It was invaluable to see the work educators are doing in other parts of the country—and around the globe!

> "The most valuable outcome of my experience is that I left a better teacher, which directly impacts my students' development."

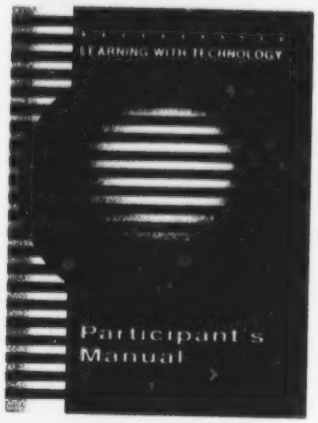
What advice would you give to future (or potential) interns?

Van Peeren: Professional development shouldn't be viewed as optional; it's essential. As educators, we have an obligation to participate in professional development in order to provide the best education for our students because they are entitled to it. The Carole Fine Internship is a wonderful way, not only to receive professional development but also to experience personal growth. At the lab you'll find a wealth of resources and knowledge.

What were some specific outcomes of your professional development internship?

Van Peeren: I left the lab a more knowledgeable teacher with better practices and a new collection of resources to draw from. The most valuable outcome of my experience is that I left a better teacher, which directly impacts my students' development. This year my kids are getting a higher quality education as a result of my professional development internship.

NCREL NEWS

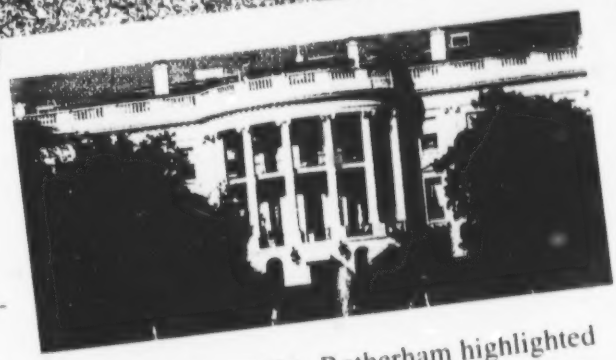


Learning With Technology Course Resources Available Online

Resources from the *Learning With Technology Course Participant's Manual* and *Facilitator's Guide* previously were available only to course facilitators or participants. Now anyone with access to the Internet can use these materials to help design professional development programs that focus on student learning.

The documents are available as downloadable PDF files. They may be reproduced without alteration for noncommercial, educational purposes. Available online: *www.ncrtec.org/pd/pd.htm*

White House Advisor Comes to NCREL



On February 18, 2000, White House Advisor Andrew Rotherham met with superintendents, principals, and other school leaders to talk about teacher quality, school governance, state standards, and other topics at a meeting facilitated by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL). Rotherham highlighted some of the education initiatives proposed in the President's State of the Union Address: closing the achievement gap, fixing failing schools, and rewarding exceptional teachers.

During his conversation with the school leaders, the issue of teacher quality was raised often. Rotherham talked about a teacher-quality initiative designed to help improve student performance—the Teaching to High Standards Initiative—and another initiative that has been proposed to help superintendents, principals, and other school leaders guide their schools to higher levels of performance—The School Leaders Initiative.

To learn more about FY2000 major initiatives and funding opportunities, visit: *www.ed.gov/inits/FY2000/*

25

NOTES

WHO DARES TO TEACH MUST NEVER CEASE TO LEARN."

John Cotton Dana

Celebrate *Pathways'* Fifth Anniversary by Visiting the New Critical Issue

For the past five years the NCREL *Pathways* team, along with scores of education experts and exceptional teachers, has brought you information on topics you wanted to know more about. The award-winning *Pathways to School Improvement* site continues its legacy of excellence by boasting a new critical issue on technology/professional development. The critical issue, *Providing Professional Development for Effective Technology Use*, offers valuable insight surrounding integrating technology into the curriculum. This critical issue is packed with need-to-know information ranging from advice on using technology effectively in the classroom to strategies for finding time for professional development.

www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/technlgy/te1000.htm

Mark Your Calendar!

The U.S. Department of Education's 2000 **Improving America's Schools (IAS) Conference** is coming soon to a city in your region. The conferences will provide opportunities to learn about new programs and to address the issues and challenges facing today's educators.

The Midwestern regional conference will be held October 2-4 in Louisville, Kentucky. Six out of seven NCREL states are part of the IAS Midwest region: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Ohio is in the IAS Eastern region; that conference will be held December 13-15 in Washington, D.C.

Wondering if you should attend? Well, if you are a teacher, principal, superintendent, parent, grant or program administrator, national or state education organization, local or state education official, or other education stakeholder, then the IAS conference is for you. For more details about the IAS conferences, please visit the conference Web site at: *www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences*

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products & services

Professional Development: Learning From the Best (Free while supplies last!)

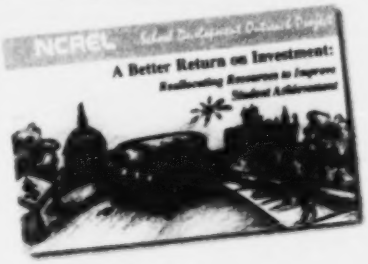
In 1996, the U.S. Department of Education established the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development to recognize schools and districts that are leading the nation in professional development. To date, the program has recognized 20 outstanding schools and districts from across the country.

Based on the lessons and experiences of these 20 award-winning sites, NCREL has developed a step-by-step guide to help other schools and districts implement strong, sustainable professional development that drives achievement of student learning goals. *Professional Development: Learning From the Best* describes the steps sites must take to design, implement, evaluate, improve, and share successful professional development programs for teachers. The guide also includes a checklist and numerous worksheets to aid in the process.

A Better Return on Investment: Reallocating Resources to Improve Student Achievement (Free while supplies last!)

Standards-based education reform has created a climate of accountability that encompasses both results and resources. Schools and districts must play a key role in deciding how resources should be used. Indeed, many schools are looking for ways to reallocate resources in order to achieve their educational visions.

This multimedia packet helps educators make sense of this complex issue. The two audiotapes examine issues of resource allocation from a national and more local perspective. Featured guests include an economist, a college dean and several



professors, and business leaders as well as a superintendent, principal, and school board member.

The accompanying booklet describes the process of change that can lead to resource reallocation and tells how schools are paying for their reform efforts in both rural and urban settings.

Three Ways to Order

1. Order online at: **www.ncrel.org/catalog/**
2. Fax your request to NCREL's Order Department at: **(630) 571-4716**
3. Call our toll-free order number: **(800) 356-2735**

Teachers Who Learn, Kids Who Achieve: A Look at Schools with Model Professional Development

Order No. PD-00-01

The book *Teachers Who Learn, Kids Who Achieve: A Look at Schools With Model Professional Development* examines the practices of eight schools that were acknowledged by the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. Published by WestEd, this resource includes profiles of each school, annotated lists of related readings and planning tools, information on implementation approaches, and much, much more.

To Order

This resource is available for $9.95 plus $2.50 for shipping and handling (add local taxes if you are ordering from CA, AR, MA, or Washington, D.C.). Receive a 20% discount on all orders of 20 or more and a 25% discount on all orders of 50 or more. For an order form, visit WestEd's online catalog at: **www.wested.org/wested/pubs/catalog/**

courageous leadership for school success

Third National Summit on Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement and Safety

April 26-28, 2000

Ambassador West Hotel; Gold Coast Downtown Chicago

Sponsored by:

The HOPE Foundation

(Harnessing Optimism and Potential Through Education)

Overview

After decades of leadership development alongside pioneers like W. Edwards Deming, Al Shanker, Edward Zigler, James Comer, Mary Futrell, Richard Green, Peter Senge, and scores of others, we have found that the Lion in the *Wizard of Oz* had it right: "It takes Courage!"

Leadership of today's schools clearly requires courage, but also the skills and ongoing support to:

- create climates that place *all* students' safety and success at the center of activity
- balance between managing and collaborative, instructional leadership
- gain community support for vital initiatives
- focus and maximize resources for better results
- meet mandates and standards, while maintaining focus on learning
- use data to drive decisions and continuous improvement

Conference Design

Fundamental to success in the areas listed above is the cultivation of trusting *relationships*. In *Courageous Leadership for School Success*, we will use a highly interactive, experiential design to model approaches that you can use immediately afterward to build those relationships and a sense of community both in and outside of your school(s).

You will come away with new skills, a close network of like-minded peers, and a renewed sense of commitment to creating true learning communities.

Your Hosts

Richard DuFour
Three-time winner of the U.S. Department of Education's Excellence in Education Award, and Superintendent of the Year, Adlai Stevenson, District 125, Lincolnshire, IL

Barbara Eason-Watkins
Principal, McCosh School, Phi Delta Kappan Educator of the Year, and winner of Chicago Public Schools Outstanding Principal Leadership Award, Chicago, IL

Keynote Presentations

Two keynote presentations will provide catalysts to discussions, planning, and activities.

Anne Byrant
Executive Director, National School Boards Association

Thomas Sergiovanni
Author of *The Lifeworld of Leadership: Creating Culture, Community, and Personal Meaning in Our Schools*, and Radford Professor, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY

Finish the Conference with an Expedition!

On Friday, April 28, you can spend the morning and early afternoon with your peers visiting a model school in downtown Chicago (McCosh Elementary & Middle School) or in Lincolnshire, Illinois (Adlai Stevenson High School District), to see many of the best practices discussed during the conference in action. Lunch and transportation are included.

Fees

The rate of $395 covers materials, lunches, continental breakfast, and all sessions for the first two days of the conference (April 26-27). For an additional $125, you can join the expeditionary learning tour to a model school in the Chicago area. Lunch, transportation, and a guided tour are provided.

Save up to $100 on your conference fee!
We understand that it usually requires at least a small, dedicated team for real change to occur. So we are providing $50 off each registration for teams of three or more.
Save $25 when you pre-pay your registration fee by check or credit card. (Sorry, but a P.O. does not count as pre-payment.)

CEUs

Attendees at *Courageous Leadership* can receive Illinois Administrator Academy Credits or a certificate of participation.

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GIVE YOURSELF A PAT ON THE BACK

Don't miss this opportunity to give yourself, your school, or your district a pat on the back for a job well done. That's right, we want to feature your professional development success stories in the next issue of *NCREL's Learning Point*.

What were your greatest obstacles? How did you overcome them? What innovative tips can you offer other readers? What is your secret to professional development success?

Send your success story to NCREL (Attention: Ann Kinder), 1900 Spring Road, Suite 300, Oak Brook, IL 60523-1480. Help pave the way to professional development success for other schools and districts by sharing your story today!

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